



State of Arizona

Janice K. Brewer
Governor

Office of the Governor
1700 West Washington Street, Phoenix, AZ 85007

Main Phone: 602-542-4331
Facsimile: 602-542-7601

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
January 9, 2012

CONTACT: Matthew Benson
(602) 542-2661
mbenson@az.gov

Governor Brewer Delivers State of the State Address, Unveils Policy Agenda for 2012 and Beyond

Releases Bold Plan to Boost Economy, Reform Education and Modernize Government

PHOENIX - Governor Jan Brewer today unveiled for 2012 and beyond a detailed policy agenda designed to prepare the State of Arizona for its second century. The policy agenda accompanied the Governor's delivery of the Centennial State of the State address.

"Arizonans can take heart in how far this state has come from the darkest days of the recession and fiscal crisis, but now is no time to lose focus," said Governor Brewer. "Every one of us benefits daily from the wise foresight and dedication of Arizona's founders and great leaders of the past. Now, we have an obligation to make the tough choices that will set a prosperous course for Arizona's second century."

"That means clearing the unnecessary obstacles to economic growth, and building an education system worthy of your children's limitless promise. It means modernizing state government to ensure it is both efficient and effective, and protecting the rights of Arizona citizens against a federal government that has lost its way."

The policy agenda reinforces and furthers the Governor's Four Cornerstones of Reform, a blueprint to:

- improve Arizona's economic competitiveness;
- bring needed reforms to K-12 and higher education;
- modernize state government; and
- push back against a federal government that has exceeded its constitutional authority.

Additional policy initiatives in areas like economic development will be announced in the days ahead as Governor Brewer issues her state budget plan for Fiscal 2013.

1st Cornerstone: Economic Competitiveness

The economy continues to be a top concern for Governor Brewer, though the outlook has brightened considerably in recent months. The State of Arizona added nearly 46,000 jobs between 2010 and 2011, and its job growth ranked 7th-best nationally.

Governor Brewer now asks the Legislature to build upon last year's signature economic initiative – the Arizona Competitiveness Package – with a new effort to prepare unemployed and underemployed Arizonans for new careers and aid small businesses by simplifying the state tax code. The Governor also reiterated her support for the proposed I-11, a planned interstate highway that would promote tourism and trade between two of the country's fastest-growing metro areas: Phoenix and Las Vegas.

Additional economic initiatives include:

- Creation of a community-college scholarship program to help adults re-train and transition into careers that fulfill local needs.
- A requirement that individuals enrolling in a taxpayer-funded job-training program undergo drug testing.

2nd Cornerstone: Education

Arizona already has the framework in place for comprehensive education reform with the Arizona Ready initiative. This plan establishes more rigorous standards for students, teachers and schools, provides new methods for parents to gauge student achievement and monitor school performance, and sets yearly benchmarks to track Arizona's education improvements between now and 2020.

Funding is part of the education equation, as Governor Brewer recognized with her successful push for Proposition 100 in 2010. She always pledged that the 1-cent tax would expire after three years. And it will, in 2013, as the Governor reinforced today.

However, Governor Brewer will remain part of ongoing discussions about proper funding for education in Arizona, and believes the current model does little to encourage innovation or performance on the part of teachers, professors and administrators.

Governor Brewer's education plan includes initiatives to:

- Implement performance-based funding for Arizona's institutions of higher education, while reviewing and reforming Community College State Aid.
- Produce a searchable database so that every parent can research the license and any disciplinary actions taken against their children's teachers, and reform the teacher decertification process.
- Lead a campaign this year to encourage involvement by parents in their children's education.

3rd Cornerstone: State Government

The citizens of Arizona deserve a lean, effective and efficient State government.

Governor Brewer will create a Government Transformation Office, housed within the Department of Administration, which will be responsible for identifying process improvements and best practices to minimize redundancies and improve customer service. Governor Brewer also will pursue reforms that modernize the State personnel system, making it easier to hire and reward the most talented employees, while removing red tape that hinders removal of the least productive workers.

The State of Arizona has an obligation to vulnerable Arizonans, including the mentally ill and children under state supervision or care.

For the seriously mentally ill (SMI), planning already is underway for a pilot program that will integrate physical and behavioral health services for Medicaid-eligible SMI individuals. This approach is expected to result in fewer hospitalizations and less reliance on the crisis system.

In recent days, Governor Brewer was provided a series of recommendations by her Arizona Child Safety Task Force. While she continues to review those recommendations, the Governor proposes several child-safety initiatives for immediate adoption. They include:



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- Involvement of law enforcement in all Priority 1 investigations that contain allegations of criminal conduct.
- Improvement of CPS caseworker training, both pre-service and continuing, including the training of CPS workers in law enforcement techniques.
- Overhaul of the abuse hotline to improve screening, decrease wait times and expedite high-priority calls.
- Introduction of Quality Management initiatives throughout CPS to streamline processes and improve outcomes for children.
- Enhance transparency and accountability.

4th Cornerstone: Renewed Federalism

The State of Arizona has a long history of pushing back against federal overreach, and will continue to be a national leader among states seeking a return to a system of cooperative federalism. Governor Brewer will maintain the defense of SB 1070, and will remain a vocal opponent of mandates under the federal health care law. Both landmark cases will be heard this year by the U.S. Supreme Court.

With this past fire season the worst in Arizona State history, mismanagement of federal lands came into frightening focus as yet another area in which the federal government has neglected its duties. Strategic thinning can both reduce the risk of massive blazes and be an economic benefit to rural communities. With today's State of the State Address, Governor Brewer called upon the federal government to stop its needless delay of the 4 Forest Restoration Initiative, a breakthrough, collaborative plan to restore 2.4 million acres across the Kaibab, Coconino, Apache-Sitgreaves and Tonto national forests.

"We are all blessed to be Arizonans, and I am honored to have a hand in guiding this state into its second century," said Governor Brewer. "Working together, and drawing upon the grit of Arizona's founders and judgment of the giants of our past, I'm confident Arizona's next 100 years can be even more fruitful than the last."

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